

The Characteristics of Pulp-Magazine Fiction

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MASS PRODUCTION, a theory which successfully combines speed and efficiency, is one of the most important features of American industry. It affects the assembly of precision-made machinery and is even incorporated in the bending and packaging of the common hairpin. Through the medium of pulp-magazine fiction the process of mass production has also played an important role in the development of American literature. This type of literature, if one may call it that, easily read because of its simplicity of construction, and readily available to the general public because of its low price, has wrought a decided change in the reading habits of the nation. These changes, unfortunately, are not beneficial to the development of better reading habits.

Pulp magazine fiction is easily recognized by its obvious characteristics. The fact that the material is printed on pulp paper is not a definite sign, however, for good fiction can often be found on pulp paper and, likewise, pulp-type fiction can be found in slick-paper magazines.

The guideposts pointing out true pulp fiction are painted in luminous letters that are visible through the densest fog. The plots employed in the writing of pulp-fiction are generally the same, regardless of the physical location or the situation involved in the story. The loyal cowpoke invariably staves off the mortgage collector and wins the love of the ranch owner's daughter by recovering the rustled cattle and sending the villain to his just rewards with his Colt .45, the valiant space pilot inevitably saves his beleaguered planet and wins the President's daughter by recapturing the oxygen-making apparatus for his air-starved planet by blasting the space renegades with his trusty atomic pistol, and the football hero always scores a touchdown in the final second of play to win the "big game" of the year and the hand of the coach's daughter after first subduing the gamblers who had attempted to "fix" the game. The development of the plot often becomes illogical and impossible; the hero escapes from an escape-proof room, takes physical punishment beyond the limit of human endurance, and completely neglects the necessities of eating and sleeping because his author must concentrate on action and can not afford to waste words on petty details.

The repeated use of hackneyed expressions is a trademark of pulp fiction. Witness the "trusty .45" of the "weather-beaten cowpoke" who rides the "lonesome prairie," the stealthy movements in the "dead of night" by the "private eye" who apprehends the "second story man" as he is about to "put the heist" on the widow's "rocks" and tells him to "reach for the ceiling." Into the same category fall the colloquialisms and slang expressions that abound in pulp fiction, the poor sentence structure, and the frequent use of bad grammar. These techniques belong to the writer who has little time to spare, and who must make up in quantity what he lacks in quality; the monetary rewards derived from the writing of pulp fiction being pitifully small.

The effects of pulp-type fiction on the reading public of the nation are, for the most part, detrimental. True, it has made reading a pleasure that is within the financial reach of all of us, but it has done so with literature that, at best, represents a very poor form of entertainment. The reading of good books increases the readers vocabulary, informs him, and provides him with material for thought; the pulp magazine does not.

"The Movie, a Synthetic Art"

Ross Lambert

THE MOVIE has become, not only one of the greatest forms of entertainment, but also, one of the greatest media for artistic expression known today. It is a specific form of art, called by some, a synthetic art. A good movie is built up as the result of the collaboration of numerous creative groups, all of which must function expertly. It appeals to people of all ages and types, and functions with varying degrees of effectiveness in the transmission of artistic ideas, portrayal of human emotions, and general information. Literally, it has become a universal language.

The movie is the consummation of the work of many creative artists. Painting has composition, color, and line; sculpture has form; music has the play and interplay of sound; the novel has the word; the dance has movement and rhythm, but the movie has all of these. To produce a movie there must be: the camera man, the sound recordist, the composer of the musical score, the art director, the actors, and the director. Each has his own technique, the perfection of which becomes an important part in the development of a truly good moving picture.